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# General Assembly

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*Official Records*

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New York

*President*: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 37 *(continued)***

**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance**

**(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

**(i) Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/177, Corr.1 and Add.1)**

**(ii) Draft resolution (A/49/L.19)**

**(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions**

**(i) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/158, A/49/263 and Corr.1, A/49/356, A/49/376, A/49/387 and Corr.1, A/49/388, A/49/396, A/49/397, A/49/431, A/49/456, A/49/466, A/49/470, A/49/516, A/49/562, A/49/581, A/49/683)**

**(ii) Draft resolutions (A/49/L.26, A/49/L.28, A/49/L.30, A/49/L.31, A/49/L.32, A/49/L.34, A/49/L.36, A/49/L.37)**

**(c) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction**

**(i) Note by the Secretary-General (A/49/453)**

**(ii) Report of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (A/CONF.172/9 and Add.1)**

**(iii) Draft resolutions (A/49/L.21, A/49/L.29)**

**(d) International cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait: report of the Secretary-General (A/49/207 and Corr.1)**

**(f) Emergency international assistance for a solution to the problem of refugees, the restoration of total peace, reconstruction and socio-economic development in war-stricken Rwanda: draft resolution (A/49/L.24/Rev.1)**

**(g) Special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda: draft resolution (A/49/L.17/Rev.1)**

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: I wish to draw the attention of members to two additional draft resolutions the Assembly has before it under sub-item (b) of agenda item 37: first, draft resolution A/49/L.34 entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti"; and, secondly, draft resolution A/49/L.37, entitled "Special plan of economic cooperation for Central America".

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I call on the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/49/L.24/Rev.1.

**Mr. Belhimeur** (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): It is my honour to introduce, on behalf of the Group of 77 and its other co-sponsors, draft resolution A/49/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "Emergency international assistance for a solution to the problem of refugees, the restoration of total peace, reconstruction and socio-economic development in war-stricken Rwanda".

I am pleased to say that the draft resolution incorporates the useful suggestions made by many delegations, members of the Group of 77 as well as of other groups. Its improvement in content and form helped give the draft resolution its large number of co-sponsors.

On behalf of the Group of 77 the Algerian delegation wishes to extend its profound and sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his report (A/49/516) on emergency assistance for the socio-economic rehabilitation of Rwanda. It is most regrettable that the resumption of the civil war and the vicissitudes experienced with regard to the Arusha Peace Agreement have interfered with the implementation of resolution 48/211 of 21 December 1993 entitled "Emergency assistance for the socio-economic rehabilitation of Rwanda".

Draft resolution A/49/L.24/Rev.1, to be seen in the context of the end of the war in Rwanda, draws the attention of the international community to the need for emergency international assistance for that country, bled white economically, financially and socially. As the preamble and operative paragraphs indicate, the draft resolution emphasizes the need for emergency international assistance for a solution to the problem of refugees, the restoration of total peace and reconstruction and socio-economic development in war-stricken Rwanda.

In the light of its primarily humanitarian nature, the draft resolution should be considered with care and should be adopted by consensus.

**The President** (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/49/L.34.

**Mr. Amaziane** (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour and pleasure to introduce, on behalf of Djibouti and my own country, draft resolution A/49/L.34, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

Djibouti, this brotherly and friendly country, deserves the solidarity of the international community for more than one reason. It is one of the least developed countries in the world, being in a category of countries whose economies are marked by structural weaknesses and by factors that make them extremely vulnerable to external shocks and natural or man-made disasters.

In addition, Djibouti is in an arid zone, with a climate of extremes, recurring drought and rampant desertification. Moreover, because of regional conflicts, particularly the conflict in Somalia, Djibouti has had an influx of more than 100,000 refugees, putting its fragile economic, social and administrative infrastructure under great tension and causing serious security problems.

Moreover, these regional conflicts have disrupted service, transit and exchange activities, thus draining away vital State revenues, and this has harmed the implementation of many priority development projects.

Finally, more recently, in November, torrential rains and unprecedented flooding devastated the country, causing the deaths of dozens of people, the disappearance of hundreds of others, the demolition of thousands of homes, the disintegration of important sectors of the national infrastructure and the destruction of cattle.

For all these reasons, my country urgently appeals to the international community to increase its financial and technical assistance to Djibouti and to support its reconstruction and development efforts. In that context, my delegation wishes to draw the attention of Member States to the Round Table for Djibouti to be organized in Geneva in March 1995, and requests developed countries and other donors to participate in large numbers.

Finally, the co-sponsors wish to thank all countries and organizations that have rendered emergency assistance to Djibouti. This draft resolution, which follows the traditional draft resolution on humanitarian assistance to that country, is humanitarian in nature, and we hope that the Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

**Mr. Barac** (Romania): My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (A/49/356) entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)". I should like to make a few comments on this important document.

The report contains general information and data about the negative consequences of the implementation of Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for neighbouring countries and other countries in the region. The actual magnitude of the impact of the sanctions varies according to the specific situation of the affected country, including the intensity of its economic ties with the former Yugoslavia, the commodity composition of its trade and the proximity and costs of alternative trade routes.

As far as Romania is concerned, I should like to stress that the implementation of the sanctions has seriously affected both external accounts and a variety of domestic variables, including economic outputs, investments, employment and the fiscal budget. The major branches of the Romanian economy that have been seriously damaged are: industry; agriculture and the food industry — for which the negative impact was mainly a result of disrupted production links, the cancellation of shipments of commodities and raw materials, and unsold goods — transportation (as a result of the suppression of traditional air, rail, road and river routes, not to mention the tremendous difficulties for the Danube river traffic); tourism; unreceived custom taxes and fees; and so on.

The Secretary-General rightly emphasizes in his report that

> "a specific feature of the Yugoslav sanctions is the unusually high cost of their 'secondary side effects'". *(A/49/356, para. 19)*.

The report also underscores the fact that

> "the bulk of the trade losses reported by the affected countries stem from additional costs as a result of the disruption of transportation across the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ... They are likely to be more significant for such countries as Bulgaria, Romania and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In addition to the increased transportation costs, current account losses reflect reductions in transportation receipts, transit fees and revenues from communications." *(ibid., para. 19)*.

Despite several instances of past and current application of Article 50, we note from the report that

> "there is no uniform and internationally recognized methodology for identifying and assessing the nature and magnitude of the specific economic problems of non-target States as a result of mandatory economic sanctions." *(ibid., para. 12)*.

We consider that it is to the benefit of both the affected countries and the international community to have an internationally recognized methodology for identifying and assessing the nature and magnitude of the losses and damages caused by the embargo regime.

As it is mentioned in the report, Romania, like other countries in the region, has received some assistance from a number of countries and from international organizations. I take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the Government of Romania to all countries and international organizations that have showed concern over our difficulties and to praise those that have already decided to afford us some assistance.

However, the assistance received in direct connection with the sanctions regime compensates for a small part of the large amount of losses and damages caused by the implementation of the sanctions. In this context, we hope that the concerns showed by some States, over the difficulties Romania is currently facing, will soon be replaced by concrete cooperation programmes, and let me emphasize: cooperation programmes in the context of the economic difficulties sustained by Romania as a consequence of the sanctions regime.

The last chapter of the Secretary-General's report, although brief, contains important conclusions, and we are grateful to him for providing such a clear outline. I shall limit myself to enumerating some of the conclusions that, in our view, have a significant importance for the future work of the United Nations.

It is underscored that, while a precise quantification of the losses is difficult for a variety of reasons,

> "there is no doubt about the fact that all the neighbouring countries and several other States in the region have been substantially affected as a result of the sanctions." *(ibid., para. 76)*.

The report concludes that

> "the total adverse impact of the sanctions is such that it requires a concerted and multifaceted response from the international community." *(ibid.)*.

It is clearly said that

> "there is no mechanism in the United Nations to address the spirit of Article 50 effectively and systematically." *(ibid., para. 80)*.

Since, in our view, there is no mechanism at all, we consider that finding a solution to this problem be a priority for the United Nations.

The report specifically mentions that, within the international financial institutions, there is "no compensatory or contingency financing", and that

> "no special mechanism has been established to directly address the adverse spillover effects of the sanctions imposed on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." *(ibid., para. 77)*.

We concur with the conclusion that additional financial resources should be mobilized from bilateral sources, international financial institutions, regional banks and the private sector in order adequately to respond to the substantial additional requirements resulting from the sanctions regime.

The last conclusion we consider important to mention is the Secretary-General's comment that,

> "it is essential to identify a set of general issues (principles or criteria) for the purpose of impact analysis and assessment on a more standardized basis." *(ibid., para. 14)*.

In our view, those are the main issues to be solved on a priority basis. Once the problems of mechanism, resources, standard approach and political will are solved, assistance to non-target States affected by sanctions will only be a question of implementation. We are of the opinion that the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's report should guide the future work of the Organization, and will benefit from the pertinent response and approach from the current session of the General Assembly.

**Mr. Al-Sabah** (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes to comment on agenda item 37 (d), entitled "International cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait: report of the Secretary-General".

At the outset, I should like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his report (A/49/207). It contains accurate and valuable information on the environmental situation in the Gulf area, and the grave environmental damage to the marine, land and atmospheric ecosystem and health of the region.

The environment in our region was one of the victims of the misguided Iraqi attack on the State of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. The environmental destruction was comprehensive and was not confined only to Kuwait but also affected the entire Gulf area and geographic areas much further afield. Since the attack on Kuwait, the environment in our region has suffered and will continue to suffer for an unknown period in the future. Although three years have passed since the last oil wells set ablaze by the Iraqi regime were extinguished, human health was and continues to be endangered as a result of the atmospheric pollution in the region due to the destruction of oil wells, and blasting which led to the release of large amounts of hazardous chemical matters and lethal chemicals in Kuwait and the region.

The pall of smoke was so thick that we in the Gulf region could not tell day from night. The environmental crimes perpetrated by the Iraqi regime did not affect the atmosphere only; it damaged the marine and land environments as well. Kuwait continues to suffer from the damage to soil and vegetation caused by the Iraqi regime having set fire to oil wells. Large quantities of crude oil from those wells have spread to form more than 240 vast lakes of oil in the desert. Some of those lakes are as much as one metre in depth.

Moreover, many land-mines remain, along with tonnes of buried ammunition, left behind in Kuwait by the Iraqi regime. These continue to threaten life and environment in our country. It is no secret that hundreds of innocent Kuwaiti civilians, including the elderly, youths and children, have lost their lives because of the presence of these mines and devices.

The marine environment too has been gravely affected: the Iraqi regime dumped between 6 million and 8 million barrels of oil into the waters of the Gulf. Many studies and reports on this matter have affirmed that this oil pollution has killed tens of thousands of sea birds. Moreover, oil now covers hundreds of square kilometres of marine vegetation, which has been damaged by the pollution. Our marine environment continues to suffer as a result of the presence in the Gulf of sea-mines and wrecked oil tankers and other ships.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) recently surveyed the pollution resulting from the wrecks of oil tankers and other ships in the northern part of the Gulf. The preliminary findings state, *inter alia*: first, that there are many wrecks posing a threat to the safety of international navigation; second, that there is obvious pollution of the marine environment, into which oil from sunken tankers continues to seep, and that grave environmental disasters could occur since many of these wrecked tankers still hold much of their cargo; third, that pollution continues owing to the currents of polluted waters from the Shaat al-Arab, where many boats, cargo vessels and oil tankers were sunk, posing an ongoing threat to the coastal regions of neighbouring countries; fourth, that the more than 200 wrecks near northern Kuwait, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq pose a clear threat to maritime traffic as there are no visible markers, although some wrecks are marked with green buoys; fifth, that there is obvious pollution from oil and oil derivatives in the survey area, with initial examination of some oil-tanker wrecks showing that these continue to hold fuel and lubrication oils in addition to portions of their cargo; and finally, that many mines and shipwrecks of various sizes lie in territorial and international waters in the northern part of the survey area, most important among them the huge Iraqi oil tanker, *Al-Amariya*, which was sunk in international waters south of the port of *Al-Bakr* in 35 metres of water and which was carrying heavy Iraqi crude. The *Al-Amariya* was cut in half, and still holds more than 100,000 tonnes of oil. The wrecks of more than 20 other oil tankers lie between *Al-Zubir* and *Umm-Qasz*, including the wreck of the tanker *Tadmur* and two oil container ships, one of which is sunk. All these ships are still loaded with oil and lubricants.

It is clear that the rehabilitation of a marine environment constantly exposed to oil and oil derivatives seeping from wrecks, including ensuring safety of navigation in the northern Gulf, requires coordination of efforts by the affected States, the international community and the relevant international organizations. Cooperation and coordination in this regard could be achieved through joint regional and international programmes on the following basis: first, immediate retrieval without any delay of the cargo of the *Al-Amariya*, both fuel and crude oil, as the wreck poses the threat of an imminent major environmental disaster; second, we must recover the cargo of the other sunken tankers, as such cargo poses imminent threat to the environment; third, clearly visible buoys and other markers must be placed, identifying the location of these wrecks, to ensure the safety of international shipping until such wreckage is removed.

My delegation reaffirms the need to implement those recommendations. They must be an urgent priority. Any delay could lead to an environmental disaster that threatens not only Kuwait, but all the other States of the region as well.

**Mr. Escobar** (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Colombia supports the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and disaster relief including special economic assistance. We stress the importance we attach to the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation, containing the Principles, the Strategy and the Plan of Action -- all bearing the name of the hospitable city that hosted the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

Colombia lies in the north-west corner of South America in an area of highly complex tectonics, where the Nazca, South American and Caribbean plates meet, generating great seismic and volcanic activity, which manifests itself in damaging earthquakes and tidal waves, as well as in the recent volcanic eruptions. The steepness of our mountains, added to biological and meteorological activities such as the rain, wind and temperature changes that are characteristic of tropical climates, makes our country prone to severe erosion, landslides and flooding. Moreover, because the majority of the population lives in urban areas in the most dangerous zones, and owing to the process of industrialization, the potential for natural disasters in our country is extremely great.

Throughout their history, Colombians have suffered from the consequences of events as devastating as the total destruction of the city of Cucuta; the Tumaco earthquake and tidal wave of 1906, one of the gravest disasters of modern times; and eruptions of volcanos such as Galeras, Ruiz and Doña Juana. In recent years there have been events such as the earthquakes at Antiguo Caldas, Popayan and Atrato Medio; the 1979 tidal wave at Tumaco and El Charco; the Nevado del Ruiz eruption of 1985; various landslides; hurricane Joan in 1988 and tornado Bret in 1993, which affected the Atlantic coast; and the floods that occur periodically in low-lying areas. All these underscore the risks to which our environment is subject and the reason why our country is considered to be one of the most likely to be affected by natural disasters.

During 1994 the most damaging of the tragic events that took place was the earthquake on 6 June in the

Departments of Cauca and Huila, its epicentre was in an area of high mountains populated principally by indigenous communities of Paeces and Guambianos. The earthquake caused severe damage in several villages. Accompanied by heavy rains that saturated the soil on the upper basin of the Paez River, the earthquake caused simultaneous landslides which, converging with the river basin, generated a flow that destroyed housing, crops and infrastructure in its wake. One hundred and twenty-eight persons died, and 429 disappeared. Among other things, more than 100 kilometres of roads were damaged, 1,664 dwellings were destroyed and 3,160 were damaged. Relief organizations dealt with 28,589 people who had been directly affected.

We are grateful that at such tragic times we have been able to rely on the kindness and generosity of Governments and peoples throughout the world. This solidarity has drawn us even closer to those who have lent us their support, participated in our suffering, enhanced the nobility of the human person and shared our common fate.

Recognizing our country's vulnerability, the Government has set up the National System for the Prevention and Limitation of Disasters. It consists of already existing State bodies at various levels and is designed to ensure the decentralization of its actions. The System's activities include risk-reduction and the rehabilitation of affected areas, with the help of the central Government and the assistance of international organizations for technological cooperation. These activities are being developed as part of a national plan in which national proposals are formulated on various fields of action such as the mapping of areas threatened by natural disasters; the identification of high-risk areas; the surveying and monitoring of natural phenomena; the strengthening of institutions and finances; the setting up of reserve centres and the preparation of emergency plans; education and training; the incorporation of prevention into municipal and regional development plans; analysis of vulnerability and relocation of housing in high-risk areas; post-disaster reconstruction; and the recovery of degraded river basins. All this is being done at the local, regional and national levels through inter-institutional and community cooperation.

Among other activities, the Government has recognized that if significant progress in disaster prevention is to be achieved it is necessary to institutionalize public, private and community bodies engaged in technological, scientific, planning and educational activities into one multisectoral and multidisciplinary organization. That will ensure preventive, coherent and consistent development.

For example, among the projects that have been supported and coordinated for the purpose of monitoring, early-warning and research into various natural phenomena, a tsunami detection and warning system has been established along the Pacific coast of Colombia and Ecuador under an agreement between the two countries. We have a network of national seismological satellites; three centres for volcanic research have been set up in Manizales, Pasto and Popayán for the constant monitoring of the activities of 14 volcanoes, including the El Ruiz and El Galeras volcanoes; a satellite network for hydrometeorological warning has been set up, composed of some 150 stations and remote-sensing and manned stations for satellite imaging, in conjunction with the Miami Hurricane Center.

In 1994, from 21 to 24 March, an Interamerican Conference on National Experiences in Natural Disasters was held at Cartagena de Indias with more than 1,000 experts in attendance from most of the continent's countries. The Cartegena Declaration that resulted from that Conference was a turning point and generated a new frame of reference on the subject.

*Mr. Seniloli (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

At the World Conference, Colombia, on behalf of its sister countries, acted as a spokesman for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States at the preparatory meetings and had the honour of serving as a Vice-President and of submitting to the Main Committee, over which we presided, both Latin America's views on natural-disaster reduction and its expectations for the participation of non-governmental organizations in this sphere.

Our Government will continue to encourage and strengthen subregional, regional and international cooperation in disaster prevention and to support those countries that suffer the consequences of such disasters.

Our country attaches particular importance to the provision of humanitarian assistance, based on the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality; to the strengthening of the early-warning capabilities in the United Nations system and their improvement and coordination; and to the proposal made at the World Conference to share the technology required in order to prevent and reduce disasters and mitigate their effects. We understand that in this area, as in others, the creation, discernment and application of knowledge must be the heritage of mankind and freely open to all peoples.

We understand the urgent need to implement the Yokohama Strategy. We are conscious of the weight of many human lives — for instance that of the small child Omaira, symbol of the tragedy of Armero, that Colombian city buried in November 1985 by the eruption of the Ruiz volcano. They and others are calling out to us in the expectation that we will save them. They are asking us all to come together and make our world a safer place.

**Mr. Mansour** (Lebanon) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to express appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the efforts he has made, as well as for his report (A/49/388) of 22 September 1994, with regard to assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon. That report gives an account of the special emergency economic assistance granted our country, which continues to struggle for reconstruction and for the liberation of its territory from Israeli occupation.

Since its establishment in 1992, the present Government of Lebanon has continued to seek a solution to the urgent economic political, social and public problems that exist throughout Lebanese national territory in order to attain the objectives of the Taef Agreement of 1989. Action for the development and reconstruction of the country has made itself felt in Lebanon's daily life. Thanks to the structural adjustment and macro-economic programme established by the Government, the economy has shown outstanding annual growth in terms of the gross domestic product, assessed at $7 billion in 1993, as compared with $4 billion in 1992.

It should also be noted that the Lebanese Government has taken some necessary measures that have had direct and positive effects on the economic, financial and social situation. The Government has brought the national currency under control. The currency has been stabilized in relation to the dollar, and the inflation rate fell from 131 per cent in 1992 to 8.9 per cent in 1993. The public deficit has been reduced from 56 per cent to 49 per cent, and the reserves of the Central Bank, which were $1.9 billion at the end of 1993, rose to $4 billion by the end of July 1994. This policy made possible a gradual strengthening of confidence in the business world, stabilization of the economy, improvement of public services and the achievement of satisfactory results on the macro-economic level through the adoption of a structural policy on housing, the reintegration of displaced persons, the utilization of human resources and the retraining of the labour force.

The Government has also given priority to the planning process aimed at rebuilding the economy in the medium and long term through two programmes. First, we have the National Emergency Rehabilitation Programme (NERP), which is a triennial programme with a turnover of $2.24 billion. This programme is designed to restore the operation of the public service infrastructure and to mitigate and resolve social problems. Secondly, there is the Parallel Programme for Recovery and Development (PPRD), the objective of which is to make lasting improvements in areas such as social services, housing and reconstruction.

Through the programme of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon (UNARDOL), the United Nations is participating in activities for the reconstruction of the country. The operational activities of United Nations organizations in Lebanon, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) have been remarkably effective in the areas of humanitarian assistance, emergency recovery, sanitation, agriculture, aid for reconstruction and the macro-economic and social development of the country.

The Lebanese Government, which has committed itself to the reconstruction and recovery of the national economy after 17 years of war, has been able to implement a structural adjustment programme leading, according to the report of the Secretary-General in document A/49/388,

> "to an improved economic situation, which currently appears to have been consolidated." (*A/49/388, para. 118*)

Even if my Government has been able to cope with the major economic and social problems and to withstand

the painful consequences of the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, it should be emphasized that the burden of 17 years of war and a continuing occupation is a very heavy one. As a result, the need for assistance and support by the United Nations remains desirable and urgent. For this reason my country, which welcomes the generous assistance provided by the United Nations, hopes that the recommendation of the Secretary-General that provides for ending the UNARDOL programme at the end of 1994 will be reviewed, since the United Nations had envisaged that the biennial programme would run until the end of 1995.

**Mr. Qader** (Bangladesh): I am indeed happy for the opportunity to speak today on this important agenda item, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, for the commendable work that he has undertaken under the most difficult circumstances. The Secretary-General also deserves our thanks for his useful reports on the subject.

My delegation fully endorses the sentiments expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77.

The recent dramatic increase in natural and man-made disasters and civil and ethnic strife has demonstrated the need for more effective and coordinated responses by the international community. Bangladesh believes that the provision of humanitarian assistance in an adequate and timely manner can create a positive environment for improving security conditions and can provide an opportunity to address the underlying problems. An appropriate and prompt response to emergency situations is crucial in assisting victims, defusing tension and creating a climate conducive to the resolution of crisis situations.

Natural disasters and other emergencies create additional pressure on the economies of the developing countries that are suffering from the chronic problems of poverty and underdevelopment. We feel strongly that humanitarian assistance should address the root causes of emergencies. Otherwise, the recurrence of emergencies could not be prevented and States would not be able to grow out of the "relief dependency syndrome". It is therefore very important that the transition from relief to rehabilitation and long-term sustainable-development programmes be ensured.

The interrelationship between humanitarian activities and those relating to peace-making and peace-keeping is becoming increasingly evident. The delivery of humanitarian assistance has indeed become a vital part of United Nations peacemaking and peace-keeping endeavours. However, in formulating United Nations humanitarian responses to complex emergencies, it should be kept in mind that the humanitarian aspect should not be overtaken by political considerations. Bangladesh believes that humanitarian diplomacy, as it has been conceptualized and is being carried out by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, forms an important part of preventive diplomacy. The Secretary-General's proposals on curative and preventive development, in his recent report (A/49/665) on "An agenda for development", deserve careful consideration, as they form an integral part of any strategy on coordination of humanitarian assistance.

The security of humanitarian personnel should receive urgent attention. Tasks of humanitarian relief personnel in many areas of the world have become increasingly difficult in recent months. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief works. Bangladesh fully supports the initiative under way for a legally binding convention in this field.

Since its creation, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) has been used in a number of emergency situations with encouraging results. Given the increasing demands on the Fund due to the proliferation and magnitude of crisis situations and to some delay in the replenishment of the Fund, we feel that it is time to address seriously the issue of readjusting CERF's resources. We support the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to increase the size of the Fund.

Most of the recommendations of the IASC contained in the Secretary-General's report are useful ones. We believe that the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the in-country disaster management team should continue to be the first line of response to disasters and emergencies. We support measures to strengthen the resident coordinator system. The designation or appointment of a humanitarian coordinator in complex emergency situations should be thoroughly scrutinized, examining the individual merit of the case and the gravity of particular situations.

A recent increase in the number of natural disasters and the consequent damage caused to the economies of concerned countries need the urgent attention of the international community. Natural disasters cause serious damage to all countries, irrespective of their levels of development. However, the especial vulnerability of the developing countries to natural disaster and its recurrence in those countries are matters of great concern. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has a special responsibility in this regard. Developing countries suffer more, and the damage to their economies is greater because of they have a weaker infrastructure and are less able to respond immediately and effectively to disasters. International solidarity is therefore essential to reduce the consequences of natural calamities in the developing countries.

In many cases, population pressures and poverty have led people to live in areas already exposed to natural and man-made hazards. The broader problems of poverty, population growth rate and so forth should therefore be addressed in an integrated and urgent manner in order to prevent and limit the consequences of disasters. Mitigation measures should be built into development programmes and be an integral part of the continuum spanning disaster, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Disaster-prone countries must at the same time be provided with the necessary resources and technical know-how to strengthen their preventive and mitigating capabilities.

The collection and dissemination of information and the United Nations natural-disaster early-warning systems have to be strengthened. It is to be noted that the impact of natural disasters is felt most during the first two or three days. Any delay in reaching the affected people may cause thousands of deaths; the prompt dispatch of a United Nations disaster assessment and coordination stand-by team and necessary resources is therefore very crucial.

My delegation would like to commend the work of the office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva in the field of natural-disaster relief assistance. There is a need to enhance the indigenous capabilities of Member States to face natural disasters effectively. The United Nations can further help disaster-prone countries to develop disaster-mitigation programmes and an early warning system. The joint Department of Humanitarian Affairs United Nations Development Programme Disaster Management Training Programme for disaster-prone developing countries is a positive step in this direction. We note with satisfaction that the first phase of the Programme has been completed. We welcome the proposal for the second phase of the Programme, which has as its central goal the reduction of vulnerability to disasters and emergencies. Bangladesh would be happy to share its own experience in handling natural disasters with disaster-prone countries or United Nations agencies.

Bangladesh feels that the designation of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was a timely and laudable initiative by the United Nations to promote awareness of the importance of disaster reduction. We are concerned that the Decade's programme has been hampered by the proliferation of political and ethnic upheavals of the last few years, which have absorbed valuable resources. We believe that with a fraction of what is being invested every year in relief, national and local capabilities for disaster reduction could be strengthened. Today, the need for prevention is stronger, both in countries in the grips of complex emergencies and in those countries — the large majority — facing increasingly severe natural disasters, often compounded by environmental degradation and population increases. We feel that sustained efforts should be made to support the strengthening of the capabilities of vulnerable countries and promote the transfer of technology and information exchange.

The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, held earlier this year, reiterated in its Plan of Action the goals and objectives of the Decade and invited attention to the need to work harder so that further concrete actions can be taken during the next half of the decade to fulfil these goals. The Conference has provided an important impetus for increased international cooperation and support through the Decade Framework. The international community must provide adequate resources to secure the timely implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World and its Plan of Action.

Bangladesh feels that the coordination of United Nations emergency-relief assistance can be more effective if it is synchronized with national relief efforts by taking into account their needs and priorities. This could be ensured through the proper integration of United Nations relief operations with those mounted by national authorities. National experiences and capacities are to be taken into account in dealing with special and recurrent emergencies. In this context, United Nations field agencies should work in close cooperation with national agencies.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the United Nations is best equipped to play a central role in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance, taking into account the principles of impartiality, neutrality and transparency that are the basis of its operations.

**Mr. Eteffa** (Ethiopia): The question of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations has been on the agenda of the General Assembly as a priority issue since 1991. Resolutions have been adopted, and decisions have been taken by the Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council with a view to further improving and strengthening the existing emergency-response mechanism in the field of humanitarian assistance. The coordination of relief operations of the various United Nations humanitarian agencies and the need to increase financial and human resources for an effective and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, including the necessity of creating information systems for the purpose of early warnings, are some of the areas of concern to the General Assembly and the international community as a whole.

The Secretary-General's report (A/49/177) reflects a serious undertaking on the part of the United Nations to address the question of humanitarian-emergencies coordination in a comprehensive manner.

It covers issues related to humanitarian emergencies to enable us to assess and review the activities of the United Nations and humanitarian agencies and, most important, it indicates to us that the way to respond to complex emergencies in time is to establish strong and effective coordination mechanisms.

The conclusions of the Secretary-General, which are largely drawn from field experience, could serve as a basis for international humanitarian intervention, which by its very nature requires an effective and timely response.

For us in Ethiopia the issue under consideration has a special significance, since we know only too well how it feels to be confronted with the need to respond to emergency humanitarian situations rapidly. The experience we have accumulated over the past decades, in terms of setting up both institutional and legal frameworks to cope with emergency situations, have enabled us to draw practical lessons on how to avert the adverse effects of man-made and natural disasters.

The 1972 to 1973 and 1984 to 1985 drought and famine situation in Ethiopia caused enormous loss of life and displacement of persons. These occurrences and their devastating effects were mainly the result of the former regime's inadequate preparations, ineffective coordination, mismanagement of humanitarian relief operations and reluctance to provide information obtained through the early warning system to the donor community in time. This definitely contributed to the worsening of an already grave, emergency situation.

At present we do not really have control over the drought situation. However, if humanitarian emergencies are linked to rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction and eventually to sustainable development, the magnitude of suffering by famine victims as a result of drought can be lessened. In Ethiopia, peasants suffer from famine periodically because the system of subsistence agriculture has not changed for centuries. Changing the traditional mode of subsistence farming to modern commercial agriculture would mean not only that a smaller percentage of the population would be engaged in the production of food items, but also that surplus food would be available when drought occurred.

The policy of marketing and forced agricultural collectivization and the forced resettlement programmes of the Mengistu dictatorship also contributed greatly to the shortage of agricultural production. The prolonged and senseless civil wars and conflicts in the country were also among the main causes of the devastating effects of the recurring famine and drought.

Today in Ethiopia serious and genuine attempts have been made to carry out relief operations and related development activities in a more rational, efficient and well-coordinated manner. The present famine situation in the country, which is caused mainly by erratic and inadequate rains and the outbreak of plant pests and cattle disease is being tackled with the great attention it deserves.

Following last April's announcement of the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission that 6.7 million people were threatened by famine, the Government took a series of measures aimed at alleviating the problem. The famine victims include not only small farmers but also displaced persons, returnees from neighbouring countries and demobilized soldiers who still need the support and assistance of the Government. The initial step that the Government took was immediately to convene the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, to chart an

appropriate strategy to meet the crisis effectively. Accordingly, a two-pronged approach has been adopted by the Government, that is, to strengthen the emergency-relief programme and to create favourable conditions for peasants to be rehabilitated and resume farming.

The measures taken by the Government include: distribution of relief food from the country's food reserve to the most affected areas, mobilization of Government short-haul trucks and private vehicles for transport relief aid, and the construction of new feeder roads and repair of the badly damaged ones in inaccessible and vulnerable areas, with a view to providing food to the needy people before the advent of the rains.

A high-level Government delegation was also dispatched abroad to inform the international community about the outbreak of famine and to appeal to the donor community to help alleviate the crisis. The response was as compassionate as it has always been.

The Government also organized a working visit to the drought-affected localities for Resident Representatives of donor countries to demonstrate to them the extent and scope of the humanitarian emergency. Also, visits were arranged for the local population and members of various organizations to sensitize them to the devastating effects of the famine and to the enormous humanitarian tasks that lay ahead in order to alleviate the looming crisis.

For the purpose of smooth and effective coordination between and management by different governmental organs and regional offices, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committees were set up at regional, zonal and district levels. An Emergency Operational Guidelines Manual, which clearly defines the responsibilities of all ministries and organizations involved in the relief work was also prepared.

To meet the need to strengthen the effectiveness of the country's existing early-warning system, a new National Committee on Early Warning was established. The National Committee is entrusted with the tasks of detecting a possible disaster and providing an assessment of the food prospects in the country. It is believed that information obtained through this system would place the Government in a better position to determine the extent of the crisis and to prepare contingency plans. The National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Fund, which is administered by a board, was also established in order to assist in the execution of relief programmes.

Relief assistance for humanitarian emergencies should not be considered as a lasting solution to problems emanating from natural disasters. Emergency situations are basically complex and require more than the temporary provision of relief aid. It is also obvious that emergency-relief aid cannot continue indefinitely. Therefore, relief and emergency assistance should be viewed in relation to rehabilitation, recovery, reconstruction and development efforts and should be addressed in a complementary manner — though it is always difficult to build a new house when the old one is burning; the fire must first be extinguished.

As is rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General,

> "Emergency assistance must be provided to bring immediate relief to the affected populations, but the essence of multilateral action must be to help societies in crisis and nations in chaos stand on their own and resume activities leading to sustainable development". *(A/49/177, para. 77).*

It was with this in mind that the Government of Ethiopia adopted last year a National Policy on Disaster Management. This Policy is based on several interrelated principles, among which the linkage between relief and development is the most important.

In this regard, relief programmes should contribute to realizing the goals of sustainable development. This approach undoubtedly facilitates the transition from relief to the rehabilitation, recovery and development that are essential to securing the desired durable solutions to humanitarian crises. In this connection, the coordinated efforts of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are of the essence. Let us hope that the compassion, cooperation and partnership of the donor community will continue.

We must recall that the total emergency relief food requirement in April 1994 was 751,000 metric tons. Pledges made by donor countries and humanitarian agencies cover 91 per cent of this. Thus far, however, only 44 per cent of the total pledged relief food has been received.

The country is in a critical emergency situation. If the effects of the drought and famine are to be mitigated and the national disaster prevention programme implemented — in particular, to ensure the success of human-centred sustainable development endeavours — it

is imperative that financial and material assistance continue.

In this connection, my delegation would like to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to all the donor countries and United Nations and humanitarian agencies for their assistance.

Although much remains to be done, the measures taken so far — I refer to the delivery of emergency assistance on the spot — have helped to avert massive loss of lives and desperate migration to urban centres in a search for relief aid. This is an encouraging development in view of the fact that the country is beset by various economic and social difficulties.

Ethiopia believes that humanitarian assistance is not the concern of just famine-stricken countries. The eradication of hunger should be an issue of global concern, and the international community should collectively discharge its humanitarian obligations.

Efficient and effective responses to humanitarian emergencies necessitate the development of a means of ensuring that national and international efforts complement each other and, by facilitating smooth operation, make an impact that is meaningful to the victims.

I should have liked to say that the question of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance ought never again to appear on the agenda of the General Assembly. However, this would only be wishful thinking, as humanitarian emergencies will be with us for some time to come. That being the case, it will be vital that humanitarian emergency assistance operations be coordinated. But let us all make relentless efforts to take this question off the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council by contributing to the termination of senseless violence and destruction around the globe and by seeking lasting solutions to recurring man-made and natural disasters.

We appreciate especially the coordinating role played by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of both Under-Secretaries-General Jan Eliasson and Mr. Peter Hansen. The Department should be strengthened in terms of manpower and material resources to enable it to handle the tremendous tasks that lie ahead.

Every effort should be made to stop violence and destruction, but at present there is no substitute for preparedness in terms of peacemaking, peace-keeping, humanitarian intervention and political settlement. Only coordinated efforts will help to alleviate the problems. In this regard, the United Nations Development Programme, in its hew role, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in collaboration with other agencies, can play a role that will make a difference.

**Mr. Ardhaoui** (Tunisia) *(interpretation from French)*: In this debate on agenda item 37 the delegation of Tunisia would first like to thank the Secretariat for the quality of the documentation that it has provided.

The Secretary-General's report refers to certain concerns regarding the devastating effects of natural disasters and other emergency situations and the loss of human life that they cause, as well as their negative impact on economic and social development. My delegation shares these concerns.

No region is today entirely free from and untouched by natural disasters and man-made devastation. Poverty, demographic pressure and the occupation of land in high-risk areas are all factors that have magnified ecological damage. In many cases they have been at the root of destruction and imbalance between man and his natural environment.

The complexity of natural disasters and other emergency situations means that the affected populations and the countries that fall victim must confront them with often very limited human and material resources. This demonstrates the importance of rapid intervention and the need for judicious coordination in the field to limit the damage, mitigate the consequences of disasters and enable populations to resume as normal a life as possible.

In this enormous task, the contribution of the United Nations system, along with that of governmental authorities, is of the greatest importance. Clearly, our States have all, in various capacities, established systems to cope with the most urgent aspects of these difficult situations. But in such conditions and complex situations, expertise, experience and the mastery of the skills that are available to the United Nations system are indispensable, given the dimensions that disasters often assume — dimensions that transcend the capacities of States.

In the field, the experience of the last few years has demonstrated that effectiveness in responding to disasters and emergency situations is a corollary of coordination

and centralization capable of harmonizing efforts, avoiding wastage of resources and improvisation.

The coordination of which we are thinking must take place, within the framework of the United Nations system, between the operational organizations and specialized agencies, under the aegis of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and in close cooperation with the Government of the country affected. This is the approach that was recently confirmed at the meetings of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which took place in Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994.

This same approach was recently confirmed at the meetings of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994. This important Conference drew up a Strategy and a Plan of Action, which the international community endorsed. The approach adopted thus will provide the foundations for disaster management in the years to come and in the next century.

We should also like to express our support for the activity of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and to renew our appeal that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund be given the necessary resources to consolidate its functioning, enhance its efficiency and allow it effectively to cope with disasters and other emergency situations.

We therefore call on the international community to take account of the needs for recovery and development in the long term of the countries concerned, and to do so from the very outset of a given emergency situation. This would help to strengthen the national capability, to mitigate the effects of catastrophes and to prevent a repetition of them. To this end, we should also like to voice our satisfaction at the proposal of President Menem of Argentina for the establishment of a volunteer corps, the "white helmets". Tunisia, which supports this initiative, believes that it could contribute to mitigating the effects of future disasters.

The Argentine initiative is particularly timely because it advocates a global approach aimed at supporting humanitarian assistance activities and at facilitating the transition from relief stage to the stages of recovery, reconstruction and development.

During the last decade, there has been a proliferation of conflicts and emergency situations in Africa. These disasters have caused peoples to suffer; they have resulted in the loss of social and economic gains, and they have reduced the basis for development. They have also increased the flows of refugees and displaced persons. Significant financial and human resources as a result have been diverted towards emergency relief instead of being devoted to development.

The United Nations system should, in these conditions, support efforts likely to prevent emergency situations, provide for continuity between the relief stage and that of recovery, reconstruction and development, promote development, and finally assist the African countries in acquiring an early-warning and emergency intervention system.

The last summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held at Tunis last June, adopted a code of conduct to be followed in organizing the relationships between the countries of Africa and in avoiding the repetition of disasters. This code of conduct, proposed by the President of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, is, as he emphasized, a commitment of civilization resulting from the patriotism of the African continent, built on fraternity, solidarity and tolerance.

The will expressed by Africa for a strengthening of the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and settlement thus attests to the determination of these peoples to work together to shelter the continent from factors of dissension. This act on the part of Africa — this act of faith — is clearly a harbinger of hope and a reason for it.

**Mr. Zandamela** (Mozambique): My delegation is pleased to speak on the question of the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance.

Humanitarian and disaster relief assistance remains one of the most critical areas in which our Organization must continue to strengthen further and redouble its efforts so that it may be able to respond effectively when called upon to act. The United Nations must be equipped with the necessary means so that, if need be, it can effectively respond to emergency situations in such a way as to minimize the loss of life and to mitigate human suffering and the destruction of property. Though we are aware that it is, first and foremost, the responsibility of each State to take care of the victims of the natural disasters and emergencies occurring on its territory, it is equally true that a number of the emergency situations that occur in the developing countries require

international assistance — in addition, of course, to the national efforts.

While we recognize the role of the international community in general and that of the United Nations system in particular in handling a number of emergency situations throughout the world, it is our considered view that the international community should also turn its attention to the question of capacity-building for developing countries, which could allow for disaster prevention and for adequate preparedness to respond in a steadfast manner whenever an emergency operation is necessary.

Building internal capacity helps to ease the process of coordination between the government of the affected country and the United Nations system, which, in most cases, plays a leading role in coordinating the efforts of the international community. The lack of support for the building of the national capacity in this field has resulted in a situation in which international organizations unwillingly take on the tasks of national institutions in their effort to remedy the situation in the field. Sometimes, when the crisis is over, there remains a vacuum. We feel therefore that something must be done, since we also believe that the affected countries need to be equipped to operate and must be given the necessary means to fill the vacuum.

Our experience in Mozambique is that the magnitude of the impact of the many natural disasters — cyclones, floods and droughts — that have afflicted the country time and again over the past two decades could have been minimized if the country had had adequate resources and the needed expertise to monitor the situation on a permanent basis.

Humanitarian and disaster relief assistance programmes must provide a link to medium- and longer-term development assistance for the developing countries in response to the commitments undertaken in favour of economic growth and the sustainable development of developing countries.

Only sound and sustainable development will ensure that the developing countries will be able to build up their internal capacity for disaster prevention and prepare them to face the challenges of natural disasters and other phenomena responsible for emergency situations. The failure to address accordingly the issue of the support needed for economic growth and sustainable development would perpetuate the problems arising from economic development, which in turn exacerbate emergency situations in a number of developing countries.

May I turn my attention now to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to Mozambique (A/49/387). We wish first of all to commend the Secretary-General for this report, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the relevant organs of the United Nations system in pursuance of the humanitarian assistance programmes for the period 1992-1994.

The prospect of lasting peace and stability in the country prepares the way for a comprehensive outlining of ways and means of tackling, in a resolute manner, the question of humanitarian assistance to Mozambique, a country which for so many years has suffered from the combined effects of war and natural disasters.

It is worth noting that since the signing of the general peace agreement two years ago, humanitarian assistance programmes have, for the first time, been able to reach large segments of the population in need throughout the country, in terms not only of food relief but also of non-food-relief items and basic services.

As is well documented in the report under consideration, basic requirements such as seed and tool distribution, health-care services, education and water-supply projects formed an important component of the Government's emergency programme well before the signing of the Rome peace accord. To that end, the Government has set up emergency response units in some of the most relevant ministries, such as those of health, education and social welfare, in order to ensure closer monitoring by the central Government of the whole process of humanitarian assistance programmes in Mozambique.

In fact, after the signing of the General Peace Agreement the Government put in place a comprehensive plan for national reconstruction, which embraces the rehabilitation of both the economic and the social sectors, including the reintegration and resettlement of returnees and internally displaced persons. The implementation of this plan will certainly allow the resumption of economic activities in the countryside and will encourage refugees and displaced persons to return to their places of origin or other places of their choice, where they can lead a normal life.

In addition to commendable efforts by the international community that have been under way to ease the emergency situation in the country, the end of war made it imperative to convene a donors' conference at Rome in December 1992, among whose main objectives

was mobilizing resources for post-war programming in support of the resettlement and reintegration of returning refugees, internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers. At this juncture, I want to reiterate my Government's gratitude to the donor community at large for the unfailing solidarity and continued support it has extended to our people.

Whilst on one hand we highly appreciate the efforts by the international community in support of our consolidated humanitarian assistance programme, on the other hand we feel that if the solutions provided are to endure, there must be an intrinsic link between emergency relief and the continuum to rehabilitation and development. Our desire to speed up the process of reintegration must be backed up with concrete measures aimed at ensuring self-sustaining capacity through development.

Another issue in the process of reintegration into normal life of millions of the most affected Mozambicans is the need for a speedy conclusion of mine-clearance, which will enable peasants to resume agricultural production in rural areas without fear. We recognize that this task is delicate, but it is also enormous, given the extension of the likely areas affected by land-mines. In this respect, we wish therefore to reiterate the appeal made by His Excellency Mr. Pascoal Mocumbi, Foreign Minister of Mozambique, in his address to the General Assembly at the forty-ninth session, for the international community to increase its generous assistance in the form of financial, material and technical support and, of course, in the form of the expertise needed for mine-clearance in Mozambique, in the light of General Assembly resolution 48/7 of 19 October 1993, on assistance in mine clearance.

I wish to reiterate my Government's readiness to continue to work closely with the United Nations and the international community in general on all major aspects of humanitarian assistance to Mozambique, and also wish to express our gratitude to all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which have rendered assistance to Mozambique. I appeal to them to continue to do so, for the magnitude of our needs remains beyond our reach.

Finally, with regard to the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique introduced on 23 November 1994 by the delegation of Ghana on behalf of the African Group, I want to announce that the Republic of Portugal has joined the sponsors of the draft resolution, which my delegation highly appreciates.

**Mr. Rowe** (Australia): Within the large number of sub-items with which we deal under agenda item 37, one issue stands out: the reality that our collective capacity "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom", can never be fulfilled without our addressing, collectively, the tragic circumstances of displaced persons, refugees and those affected by the onset of sudden natural disasters. The scale of human misery involved, the sad waste of human life, often in sickeningly large proportion, the wasted opportunities and the lost productive output are compelling reasons for us to invigorate our efforts in humanitarian emergency assistance. Simply, our responses to emergencies must be made as effective as possible.

Australia takes very seriously its role in working for comprehensive solutions to humanitarian needs. We have an extensive history of assisting both our immediate neighbours and those more distant from Australia. Our assistance ranges from programmes of preparedness and response for the victims of natural disasters — for example, cyclones in the South Pacific — to significant levels of assistance for Rwanda — for example, the supply of skilled engineers to assist in the rehabilitation of the water supply. Our assistance is provided through a range of measures, including support for United Nations agencies. Australians have a proven track record of working in the field in a variety of situations, to provide assistance to those in need.

But we are not prepared to rest on this record. We are conscious of the shifting pattern of humanitarian emergencies and the increasing prevalence of so-called complex humanitarian emergencies, factors which are redefining the nature and extent of refugee and emergency assistance and posing new challenges for all of us.

As a result, Australia recently undertook a major review of its humanitarian relief programmes in order to achieve greater relevance and focus and to improve our capacity to work effectively with others, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. We have embarked on our own internal processes to improve coordination among relevant actors, to upgrade the professionalism of involved staff and to improve our procedures for determining and assessing our assistance.

Australia has consistently emphasized the importance it attaches to improving the effectiveness of United Nations efforts in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations so often plays a pivotal

role in bringing together the framework for an appropriate response by the international community. Its relevance, its effectiveness, its delivery capacity and its efficiency are important features of the global response. Unless all parts of the system are operating effectively, our capacity to serve will be reduced.

We welcome the efforts made by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and by the United Nations agencies members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in improving their capacity to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly at the field level, as demonstrated in the report of the Secretary-General. We acknowledge with deep appreciation the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs under the outstanding leadership of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen. We hope that he will continue his programme of consultations among Member States on humanitarian coordination issues.

Specifically, Australia can endorse the measures relating to strengthening field coordination in complex emergencies and the continued use of the interest rate of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund for funding rapid coordination arrangements in the field. With regard to additional funding for the Fund, while we appreciate the need for a clearer picture on the operation of the Fund, we recognize that the Fund has no ceiling and that additional contributions would be welcome from a larger group of contributors.

Given the rapidly changing circumstances, we believe it is essential for all those involved in humanitarian assistance to be vigilant about the effectiveness of that effort. We are currently seeing the benefit of efforts over the past 12 months to improve the capabilities of the United Nations system through the role of the relatively new Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In the next 12 months we will be looking to make assessments of this effort. It will be up to the system itself to demonstrate that the present coordinated approach is the most effective one. We are pleased that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) have made a start in grappling with such difficult issues as displaced persons, rehabilitation of child solders and de-mining. We look for further progress to be made on these issues and on field-level coordination over the next 12 months.

There are a large number of draft proposals before us on this item, which illustrates the importance of meeting the needs of humanitarian assistance and the urgency of focusing attention on specific country situations. Australia will play its part in arriving at decisions broadly acceptable to all and will give whatever assistance we can to the Permanent Representative of Austria, in his role as Vice-President, as he chairs our discussions on the draft proposals.

**Mr. Melamed** (Israel): Israel has carefully studied the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to express our appreciation to the many organizations and United Nations agencies that are responding to the growing challenges posed by humanitarian crises. Their efforts are especially important in the face of the

> "rapid increase in the magnitude and scope of such crises", (*A/49/177, para. 3*)

described in the Secretary-General's report.

We share the concerns generated by the new challenges to effective humanitarian action: an increasing number of humanitarian crises, flagrant disregard for human rights in afflicted areas, intentional targeting of relief workers for attack, deliberate acts to prevent relief from reaching suffering populations, shortages of resources and financing for humanitarian assistance — and on and on.

*Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Israel seeks to contribute, within its limited resources, to the united efforts to confront these challenges. Our emergency and ongoing humanitarian assistance has brought Israeli know-how, expertise and equipment to the aid of suffering populations in places as diverse as Cambodia, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and others. In the case of Rwanda, for example, Israel was the first country to establish and operate a field hospital in Goma, Zaire, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations, to care for thousands of Rwandan refugees. During its activity, close to 3000 patients were treated in the emergency room, and over 2500 were hospitalized. Mindful of the importance of cooperation in fostering the success of humanitarian activities, Israel maintained regular contact with the civilian-military coordinating team of the UNHCR, which assisted in finding a location for the hospital. The effort was also

coordinated with the Zairian authorities, who provided the site for the hospital.

We are currently exploring ways of increasing our involvement in United Nations peace-keeping operations. In this regard, we place great emphasis on the humanitarian aspects of such undertakings. We have considered a number of possible avenues of involvement and have advised the United Nations of our willingness, in principle, to contribute a fully staffed field hospital for service with one of the United Nations peace-keeping operations, possibly in Africa.

Israel welcomes the role played by the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies in enhancing the coordination of United Nations activities. In the light of the recent humanitarian crises throughout the world, we believe that there is a clear need to respond quickly in order to save human lives and prevent the further deterioration of already intolerable conditions. We therefore fully support the assigning of high priority to strengthening the emergency preparedness and response capability of the United Nations system.

Anti-personnel land-mines planted during times of armed conflict and left after the conflict is over have caused many tragedies for a great number of civilians. The proliferation of land-mines has had tragic consequences. It is estimated that more than 85 million uncharted land-mines are now scattered over 62 countries. Addressing the worldwide effort to reduce the damage caused by anti-personnel land-mines, Israel has decided upon a moratorium of two years on their transfer. During this period, Israel will work with other interested parties to review the establishment of a permanent regime for banning the transfer of anti-personnel land-mines. In addition to the two year moratorium, Israel offers its know-how, assistance and training in mine clearance to all interested parties.

We believe it is essential not only to respond quickly and effectively in emergency situations, but also to encourage measures designed to minimize their occurrence or to reduce the severity of their consequences when they do occur. In this regard, I wish to emphasize the inherent connection between democracy and disaster prevention and relief.

The report of the Secretary-General notes a "dramatic increase" (*A/49/177, para. 1*) in emergencies involving civil and ethnic strife and the flagrant disregard for human rights. By encouraging democratization we can reduce the risk of being forced to confront such emergencies in the future. Democratization is tied directly to the establishment of peace, stability and respect for human rights. Never has one democracy made war upon another. This is not the result of chance; rather, it stems from the very nature of democratic government, which puts the people's destinies in their own hands and is attentive to the people's yearnings for peace and prosperity.

The openness of democratic societies safeguards the human rights of its citizens. It also ensures that Governments will be responsive to the needs of the people, thereby encouraging quicker, more efficient responses to all forms of disaster. The open debate and self-criticism found in democratic societies act as a safeguard against situations in which the Government puts its interests above those of its citizens and thereby exacerbates the severity of crises and their consequences.

Israel looks forward to joining the consensus on the draft resolutions before us. We are also pleased to have been one of the sponsors of a number of resolutions on humanitarian matters, during this session. We view this as an expression of our great concern for the issue, as well as an indication of our readiness to cooperate with the international community in providing assistance to the suffering people throughout the world.

**Mr. Yeltchenko** (Ukraine) *(interpretation from Russian):* First of all, the delegation of Ukraine would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the item under discussion, an item which undoubtedly deserves greater attention from the international community. Ukraine shares the opinion expressed here concerning the need to strengthen the United Nations response to emergency situations, be they natural or man-made disasters. Effective and timely assistance by the international community in such emergency humanitarian situations or assistance in overcoming the consequences of military and political, or ethnic and civil conflicts is a prerequisite for subsequent action to promote economic recovery and development.

In recent years, we have witnessed the establishment of new coordination machinery in the area of the international community's response to emergency situations. Although we recognize the need for additional measures to improve coordination, on the basis of the guiding principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182, we can, nevertheless, note with

satisfaction that the efforts of the last two years to coordinate international humanitarian assistance are starting to yield concrete results. The documents submitted for our consideration, and in particular the reports of the Secretary-General under the symbols A/49/177 and Add.1, attest to the great amount of work done to improve United Nations activity with regard to emergency humanitarian assistance. As a whole, we share the conclusions and recommendations contained in these reports.

In our view, the activity of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is equally deserving of praise. We note the efforts made by the Department to strengthen the United Nations ability to provide a rapid response to emergency situations, in particular the establishment of a central register of potential emergencies, a support team for afflicted countries, field management groups and special rapid response groups.

In addition, important work is being carried out to establish an early-warning system for humanitarian crises, which we hope will be ready for use in the near future.

Recently the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have been more productive. We consider that the recommendations approved by this body with a view to strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the field have been well thought out and comprehensive and should be implemented.

One of the most complex problems facing the United Nations in ensuring effective action in connection with the growing number of natural disasters is the lack of the necessary financial resources. In the view of our delegation, it is high time to give serious thought to the possibility of increasing the funds of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, while retaining its voluntary nature. The Fund could be expanded along different lines, for example, through voluntary contributions in kind.

Also worthy of attention is the proposal to increase sources of financing for humanitarian operations at the initial stage. We hope that the General Assembly will approve the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the use of machinery for financing the coordination of a rapid response to emergency situations through the interest on income received by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

We cannot forget that for many people of the world the international community, as represented by the United Nations in its role of provider of assistance, is often their only remaining hope.

Ukraine, which eight years ago itself experienced the nightmare of the Chernobyl disaster clearly understands the nature of emergency situations and how important timely support from other countries is in resolving the plethora of problems they cause. In the years following the disaster, the international community gave considerable assistance to Ukraine in eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl tragedy. I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all countries, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, scientists and experts, and to all of those who came to our assistance during that difficult time.

However, Chernobyl is not a thing of the past. The problems it has created will continue for many years and will require ever-increasing means and efforts to overcome them.

Unfortunately, within this Organization, the problems of the Chernobyl disaster have recently more often than not been pushed to the background. I should like once again to emphasize that Ukraine is not in a position to cope with the onerous consequences of the accident without the assistance of the international community. This is why we will be trying to revive United Nations interest in the problem of Chernobyl and to ensure realistic programmes for international cooperation in this sphere.

I should like, in particular, to dwell on something that is a growing problem for Ukraine and a number of other States. It is the problem of the coordination of efforts in the area of special economic assistance to countries and regions which are suffering from the imposition of sanctions. In recent years, in connection with the active use by the United Nations Security Council of economic measures of a coercive nature, as an important means of international efforts to settle regional conflicts, the problem of the adverse effects of sanctions on the whole and their impact on third countries, in particular, has acquired a qualitatively new aspect. A striking example of this is the imposition of sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The urgent need to render assistance to countries which have suffered as a result of the implementation of the embargo regime and to resolve their specific economic problems is almost universally acknowledged,

but in our view, this is clearly not enough. We need bold and concrete proposals, and adequate practical steps by the organs and agencies of the United Nations system.

The United Nations Security Council is imposing sanctions on behalf of the entire international community and therefore all States must bear the responsibility for their implementation and their consequences. In our view, in order to enhance the responsibility of States for taking such decisions, prior to consideration by the Security Council of resolutions on the introduction of coercive measures in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, there is a need to make use of consultation machinery with third countries. These would include countries bordering on the State which is the violator of international law, States which are regional neighbours and other States, for example, which have traditional trade or economic ties with the country in question.

Ukraine, like other neighbours of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, is bearing a triple burden as a result of the application of the United Nations embargo regime against that State. The traditional markets for products have virtually disappeared. Economic and business ties with Yugoslav partners have been broken. The normal rhythm of transport of cargo on the Danube has been upset and, what is more, the States of the region have the added responsibility for monitoring compliance with the sanctions regime, which also requires significant expenditure. The adverse effects of sanctions are gradually becoming chronic and long term.

As a result our economic losses now account for approximately $4 billion. Ukraine now is not in a position in which it can allow the loss of millions of dollars every month. Therefore we shall firmly work for a solution to the problem of the granting of effective assistance to the States that are suffering.

The delegation of Ukraine has carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (A/49/356) entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)", which in our view forms a good basis for further analysis and discussion of the given problem. At the same time the document under consideration lacks an assessment of the effectiveness of collective action by the United Nations system in response to the appeals that were made to the Organization on the recommendation of the Security Council. In our view there is a need, on the basis of analysis of the Yugoslav experience, to propose universal recommendations and constructive ideas to alleviate the negative consequences of sanctions in the future.

We support the basic conceptual conclusion contained in the report, that the total adverse impact of sanctions on individual countries and regions is such that their mitigation and overcoming will require the political will of Member States and a concerted and multifaceted response from the international community. We are obliged to note with regret that so far few have demonstrated such will. This doubtless runs counter to the fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter, in particular Article 49, which states

> "The Members of the United Nations shall join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out the measures decided upon by the Security Council."

It is precisely for this reason, in our view, that the key provisions of General Assembly resolution A/48/210 have not been fully implemented.

Ukraine, conscientiously implementing its obligations in accordance with the United Nations Charter and considering United Nations sanctions as an inalienable element of international efforts to find a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis, favours adequate and effective assistance by the international system to resolve special economic problems.

We shall continue to insist on the adoption of effective measures in this area which would strengthen and supplement the previous decisions adopted by the United Nations. A first step in this direction is, in our view, a stepping up of trade with the States which have suffered, an expansion of the flow of investments to their economy and the development of alternative and communication infrastructures. Particular attention should be paid to resolving macroeconomic problems and also to questions of a social nature. We are also counting on the fact that the United Nations will strengthen and expand cooperation with international financial institutions, regional organizations and the Governments of donor States to mobilize additional resources to assist the countries that have suffered.

Otherwise, the trust of United Nations Member States in the institution of sanctions will be undermined once and for all, and that in turn will call into question the principle of collective action to implement the United Nations measures.

**Mr. Munyampeta** (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): On 6 October the Head of State of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. Pasteur Bizimungu, had the opportunity, on behalf of our delegation, to congratulate the President most warmly on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly of the Organization at its forty-ninth session. The delegation of Rwanda wishes to reiterate its warm congratulations, this time on the outstanding skill with which he is conducting our work.

It is an honour for me to speak before this lofty Assembly, to make the modest contribution of the delegation of Rwanda to the debate on sub-item (f) of agenda item 37, "Emergency international assistance for a solution to the problem of refugees, the restoration of total peace, reconstruction and socio-economic development in war-stricken Rwanda".

At the outset, the delegation of Rwanda wishes, on behalf of the Government and the people of Rwanda, to express its deep gratitude for the interest shown with regard to the consideration of this additional item, submitted by my country on the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the Assembly.

As a brief history, which is useful to outline, on the origins of the Rwandan problem, the international community will recall the painful events of the years 1959-1960 which forced thousands of Rwandan citizens belonging to the Tutsi socio-ethnic group into exile.

From the independence of Rwanda, on 1 July 1962, to the outbreak of war on 1 October 1990 the republican regime established by the Bahutu was never able to find a just, equitable or lasting solution to the problem of refugees, whose long exile has lasted a sad 35 years. Without doubt therein lies the macabre origin of what is called the "Rwandan tragedy", following the long war in Rwanda and the turns of events which the international community has followed.

Those in exile fought to restore their inalienable right to return and to live in their ancestral land, a common heritage of all Rwandans.

Under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity, the countries of the Great Lakes subregion of Africa started a peace process with which later the United Nations and a number of Western countries would associate themselves. I wish to express our gratitude for their invaluable support to Rwanda.

The peace process took place in the form of negotiations which led to the important Arusha Peace Agreement, signed on 4 October 1993 in the United Republic of Tanzania.

The establishment of a genuine state of law in Rwanda, strict respect for the rights of the human person, the sharing of power, the establishment of a national army without discrimination, the promotion of democracy and of inter-ethnic symbiosis, as well as the triggering of the dynamic of national reconciliation, are the main elements of the Arusha Peace Agreement.

Since its birth at Arusha the Peace Agreement has suffered many vicissitudes that impeded its comprehensive implementation.

It is deplorable that the spirit and hope of Arusha, which enabled the international community to breathe a sigh of relief, has been betrayed by the regime of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development — Coalition for the Defence of the Republic (MRND-CDR), which was responsible for the renewed outbreak of hostilities after the death of the former President, Juvenal Habyarimana, on 6 April 1994.

The Rwandan tragedy culminated — and I am not saying anything that is not well known — with the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi ethnic group and the other losses of life. This deprived Rwanda of much of its national spirit, emanating from the common will to live together. The sickness that has overtaken Rwanda is as much mental as physical. An invaluable treasure, bearing the age-old culture and story of the Rwandan people, the spirit of the Rwandan nation has been diminished by the war and has been traumatized in various ways.

Devastated by a relentless four-year war, Rwanda finds itself economically, financially and socially drained. As I am sure the Assembly will understand, it deserves to receive an intravenous shot and an oxygen mask from the international community.

My country turns to the international community, represented here, and asks it to be generous in helping Rwanda heal its mental and physical wounds.

From the economic standpoint, everything must be done or redone to redress the disastrous situation in the agricultural sector, which employs 96 per cent of the population, the devastation of the thin industrial fabric of

the country, the dismantling of the skilled-labour sector and the cooperatives, and the destruction of a large number of pieces of equipment and socio-economic and administrative structures. Buildings, schools, nutrition and health centres, hospitals, factories and other parts of the economic and socio-cultural infrastructure have been destroyed, looted or damaged.

There is a vital need for the reforestation of the country to preserve the balance of the ecosystem, which has been greatly disturbed by large population movements and the degradation of the ecological heritage. Agricultural tools, fertilizers and seed are lacking in a country that is rather poor and overpopulated and that, from April to the present, has lost two farming seasons. The country had a flourishing energy system, thanks to the good working order of the hydroelectric stations, but it has now broken down and drinking water has become very rare.

From the point of view of human resources, the serious consequences of the genocide and the other losses of life have deprived Rwanda of many elements necessary for development. To paraphrase an idea of Alfred Sauvy, the internationally known economist and demographer, there are some who contend that underdevelopment is caused less by the lack of natural resources than by the lack of a well-trained managerial staff. It is regrettable that after all the effort that has gone into the training of staff, it has been decimated, mutilated or driven into exile. Hence, Rwanda needs technical assistance in various spheres of development, owing to the lack or insufficiency of well-trained managerial staff at a time of broad reconstruction. In their various categories, the Rwandan refugees number in the millions — and we must add to this the thousands of war-displaced people, widows and widowers, orphans, the disabled, the rejected — all needing subsidies and socio-professional reintegration.

The economist and political writer Jean Bodin left us this thought: "The real wealth lies in the people". On the threshold of the twenty-first century, we can note with satisfaction that the international community is paying tribute to that thought by making man the centre, the driving force and the final purpose of development. In this context, we must pay tribute also to the Secretary-General, whose Agenda for Development re-establishes the role and the place of man as the alpha and omega of development.

Those examples show why Rwanda will for a long time suffer the serious consequences of the genocide and the other losses of life in all social sectors, including the country's élite groups. Can this material and moral void be filled?

From the humanitarian standpoint, the situation is even more disastrous now than it was when the Department of Humanitarian Affairs made an inter-institutional appeal in April 1993 — an appeal repeated on 22 July 1994 by the United Nations for the benefit of the victims of the Rwandan crisis.

We must mention the drafting of the plan for the urgent normalization of the situation in Rwanda, which sets forth the areas in which financial, material and technical assistance will be initially necessary.

The Rwandan delegation expresses its deep gratitude to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to draw the international community's attention to the very grave humanitarian crisis throughout Rwanda.

We also sincerely thank the neighbouring countries and all other countries, the bodies of the United Nations system, the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and various individuals for their humanitarian assistance to Rwanda and to its countless refugees and war-displaced people, both before and after the renewed outbreak of hostilities from April to July 1994.

The Government of National Unity, installed last July, has shouldered the enormous burden of national reconciliation, but it finds itself facing the intransigence of the forces of the former Government, which are hostile to the voluntary return of refugees. Chaos and terror reign in the Rwandese refugee camps.

The delegation of Rwanda bitterly deplores the delay in setting up the International Tribunal for Rwanda competent to try persons suspected of serious violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda, those responsible for genocide. Clearly, by bringing to justice persons who have committed and/or encouraged genocide, the international community would contribute to hastening national reconciliation in Rwanda. To avoid the scandal of a system of double standards with regard to the flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, and to avert the danger of other cases similar to that of Rwanda, the international community must support the Government of Rwanda in judging those responsible for genocide.

The reconstruction of the economic, social, educational and administrative infrastructures is one of the gigantic tasks facing the Government and people of Rwanda, who are seeking emergency and increased assistance from the international community. Donor organizations have carried out the preliminary planning necessary before assistance can be provided for reconstruction projects and for checking and restoring basic infrastructures.

Rwanda is beseeching donor Governments, international bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure the speedy implementation of their assistance programmes. My country's economic and financial disaster is such that the Government lacks the funds to restore even the most rudimentary administrative structure or to pay its personnel. There is therefore a need, indisputably urgent, to organize at least some stopgap assistance in the form of subsidies bilaterally and/or through international financial institutions.

This is the time and the place for me to express the deep gratitude of the delegation of Rwanda to the United Nations Secretary-General for his interim report (S/1994/1133) of 6 October 1994 to the Security Council. The report eloquently describes the urgent need for increased multilateral assistance for Rwanda from the international community.

The delegation of Rwanda would be remiss if it did not also reiterate its deep gratitude to the General Assembly for having adopted by consensus resolution 48/211 of 21 December 1993, "Emergency assistance for the socio-economic rehabilitation of Rwanda."

When the General Assembly considers the draft resolution (A/49/L.24/Rev.1) on my country bilateral donors will have a chance to study ways and means of assisting the Government of Rwanda to solve the problem of its arrears in payments to the World Bank, so that it may have access to that institution's resources.

Here I should like to express my deep thanks, and the thanks of the Government and people of Rwanda, to all the many countries that have sponsored that draft resolution, as well as to the international community for its support. The text of the draft resolution includes all the very useful suggestions made by a number of delegations from various regional groups. Once again, we thank them all.

The Assembly's kind consideration of the Rwandan question will support the request to Member States to contribute generously to the special Trust Fund established on 14 July this year to finance humanitarian relief and rehabilitation programmes under way in Rwanda.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to recall here the universal wisdom of the saying "Heaven helps those who help themselves." The people of Rwanda recognize the truth of that wise adage. They are doing everything they can to ensure that the assistance provided by the international community will be supplementary and not an end in itself.

Therefore, the Government of Rwanda is concerned with the implementation of the Arusha Peace Agreement, and with all its implications for national reconciliation, so that all members of Rwandese society may regain mutual trust and return to work for the country's self-development.

If all beginnings must also have an end, then the tragedy of Rwanda is at the beginning of the end. In order to end it once and for all, the Rwandese people must themselves forge the key to their better future.

However, to enhance its present and build its future, my country, which has been bled white, needs international emergency assistance to solve the problem of its refugees, restore total peace and carry out the rehabilitation and socio-economic development of war-torn Rwanda.

**Mrs. Hassan** (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The delegation of Egypt would like at the outset to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations contained in document A/49/177 and Add.1. We would like also to express our thanks to the Department for Humanitarian Affairs and the Secretariat, and in particular Mr. Peter Hansen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his introductory statement and for his efforts and those of all the members of his staff devoted to the provision of humanitarian assistance in various parts of the world.

The various reports on the sub-items of this item clearly indicate a deterioration of the humanitarian situation in many parts of the world. This indicates that greater efforts are needed to mitigate the suffering of the

countries stricken by man-made or natural disasters, to assist them in overcoming the crises they face and to provide them with the necessary assistance they need in order for them to rehabilitate and develop. The setting-up of an advisory board by the Secretary-General consisting of eminent personalities from different parts of the world testifies to the importance attached by the United Nations to the mitigation of natural disasters and to developing a clear vision of the measures necessary for dealing with those disasters, either in the area of prevention or of mitigating the effects of such disasters.

The delegation of Egypt wishes to seize this opportunity to express appreciation and thanks to the international community for the solidarity and support extended to the Egyptian Government in dealing with the consequences of the torrential rains that swept the southern part of Egypt last month. Those rains caused great damage, destroyed whole villages and displaced their surviving inhabitants. The situation requires major efforts to mitigate the suffering of the people and to rebuild the destroyed villages, in order to repatriate and rehabilitate the displaced persons and to make possible the resumption of normal life after the havoc wreaked by the rains and the resultant destruction of vital facilities that have to be rebuilt.

The Egyptian Government immediately took all measures to provide relief to the people affected, and have laid down an integrated plan to mitigate the consequences of the disaster and to rehabilitate and develop the stricken areas. The plan is being implemented by the Egyptian authorities in cooperation with the international community.

The convening of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan, in May 1994 and the Plan of Action it adopted to coordinate humanitarian assistance and international relief at both the national and international levels, represent a strengthening of the relief mechanisms and an advanced step towards more international cooperation in achieving integration between relief efforts, rehabilitation and development, the three principal components of any effort to restore normal life to stricken areas, and to proceed from relief to development.

Egypt's delegation wishes in this context, to seize the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of strengthening the Department for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, as it is the focal point for the coordination of the humanitarian and emergency relief provided by the Organization.

We have listened with great interest to the statement by the representative of Rwanda, in which he set out the major political and humanitarian developments in his country, and the efforts being deployed by his Government to restore normal life and to encourage the return of approximately 2 million refugees to their villages.

These are efforts that require financial and technical support by the international community in order for them to succeed. In that regard, I should like to affirm Egypt's support for the implementation of the plan of action proposed by the Rwandese Government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of African Unity, to deal with the crisis in Rwanda from a regional perspective and in accordance with the Arusha agreement.

Egypt's delegation also wishes to reiterate its full support for the new phase of the mission currently undertaken by the United Nations in Rwanda, wherein the focus is on the rehabilitation and repatriation of the returnees and displaced persons, instead of the mere provision of emergency humanitarian relief. The success of such a task requires support for the Rwandese Government in light of the need in all parts of the country for rebuilding the facilities that have been completely destroyed by war. This, as of necessity, calls for more efforts to bring about national reconciliation, tolerance and understanding between all factions of the people, an undertaking wherein the role of information is paramount.

The political events that took place in Rwanda and the conflicts and bloody massacres that ensued and claimed the lives of about a million people make it necessary for the international community to study in depth the role the United Nations must play and the timing of the efforts it deploys if the Organization is to ensure that the human disaster that took place in Rwanda should never happen again.

The hesitation of the international community in taking a decision to intervene and put an end to the violence in Rwanda at the proper time has contributed, regrettably, to a further deterioration of the situation and the resultant displacement of more than 2 million refugees; this placed an additional burden on the United Nations that could have been much lighter had the decision to intervene been taken at the appropriate time.

Egypt's delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the Rwandese people in its efforts to rebuild its country, and calls upon all Member States to contribute to the rehabilitation programmes either by contributing to the special fund set up by the Secretary-General for that purpose or through bilateral assistance programmes.

Egypt, for its part, will continue to provide the Rwandese people with technical and humanitarian assistance in order to enable it to overcome its present plight, rebuild the structures of its state and restore the stability that Rwanda needs to regain its place in the African and the international family of nations.

**Mr. Szymanski** (Poland): At the outset, I should like to thank the Secretariat for the comprehensive documentation provided under this agenda item, and especially for the report of the Secretary-General in document A/49/177, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

My delegation appreciates the efforts of the United Nations system as a whole, as well as those of other humanitarian entities and non-governmental organizations, in responding with humanitarian assistance to the needs of many countries. The problem of delivering such assistance is becoming much more multifaceted in an era experiencing a rapid increase in the magnitude and scope of "complex emergencies", an increase that has called for a response. This reflects the need for concerted action to enhance the capacity of the international community to respond to these crises.

It is true that the international relief system is under severe strain, facing burgeoning demands, and that international operations are becoming more dangerous. This implies that we have an obligation to work out a clearer definition of the respective roles and responsibilities of the various entities involved, better analyses of emergency situations and assessment of needs. On the other hand, it is still crucially important to ensure the security of international personnel and relief supplies as well as the proper distribution of such supplies.

We fully agree that the strategies and working methods at Headquarters and at the field level should permit an appropriate and timely emergency response, and we are aware that the coordination of the work of all actors in the process of the delivery of humanitarian assistance needs to be improved.

My delegation therefore fully supports ideas for such an improvement, based on a rational approach leading to enhanced coordination and effectiveness of work and a better use of allocated resources. We believe that a positive role is played by the system whereby the Emergency Relief Coordinator, supported by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, is provided with such coordination mechanisms as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, composed of the executive heads of relevant humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the consolidated appeal process and the Early Warning System supplement the existing structure and make it more responsive. We should proceed towards the elaboration of such a strategy, which will allow for a better connection between the three stages of giving assistance: relief and emergency assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation and, finally, sustainable development.

Situations in which a consolidated response by the international community is becoming extremely important have many sources. The increase in the overall impact of disasters in recent years indicates the need to strengthen preventive and preparedness measures.

The initiatives, ideas and programmes of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) were warmly welcomed and supported by the Government of Poland. After five years of Decade-related activities, we very much appreciate its accomplishments. The goals of the Decade have a positive and inspiring impact on the work being initiated in a number of countries, including Poland. The Decade-related activities have been important in creating a basis for better organization of preventive activities.

Poland has now reached a transition stage, in which the centrally controlled economy has been transformed into a free market economy, with a new ownership structure and the domination of private property. Socio-economic changes have caused a need for profound modifications in the system of disaster prevention.

In 1992, under the auspices of the Polish IDNDR Committee, the National Plan of Action in the Domain of the Prevention of Natural Disasters and Other Extraordinary Emergency States in the Territory of the Republic of Poland was elaborated. The main task under the Plan was the elaboration of a long-term programme for the reduction of losses caused by natural and

technological disasters. The most hazardous zones in the country have been identified, and the assessment of potential losses has almost been completed; nevertheless, more sophisticated hazard and loss evaluation is lacking. Short-term protective and early intervention measures have been identified and relatively well organized at both the national and local levels.

There are some long-term preventive plans. However, their effectiveness is doubtful, and their implementation difficult, due to the lack of financial resources. Such plans will need improvement and reorganization.

It is expected that implementing the project on Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level, sponsored by the United Nations Environment Programme, will increase community awareness and emergency response at the local level. Unified structures, organizational procedures for prevention, warning systems and monitoring are still lacking, however.

In the light of current developments concerning the Decade's tasks, any tendency to expand the scope of activities undertaken within the Decade should be firmly opposed. Activities ought to be concentrated strictly on the prevention and alleviation of the consequences of natural phenomena.

It seems to be necessary to continue efforts to determine precisely concepts and definitions of natural disasters. It might be useful to establish a team or working group to revise existing terminology and define supplementary terms. For instance, the term "natural disaster" seems less precise than "disaster caused by natural phenomena".

The arguments and rhetoric over disaster prevention and rescue work should be replaced by concrete action to prevent and repair damage caused by natural hazards. Models, scenarios and profit-and-loss analysis of actions under way should be used to evaluate costs of prevention. Quantitative characteristic and risk assessments, with the application of scientific methods, should be implemented.

We should remember that the ecological disaster affecting human beings is also causing the degradation of our planet. Therefore, we should strive for a free exchange of information on the occurrence of hazards and their effects, know-how systems for forecasting and prevention, and modern technologies for safe industrial production aimed at minimizing technological risks.

The United Nations system, in cooperation with intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies and other humanitarian partners, should better prepare itself to respond to the complexity and range of humanitarian emergencies. Further efforts should be made to achieve the right balance between humanitarian, peace keeping and peacemaking efforts, as well as human rights and the environment, in order to meet the needs of certain countries.

Poland will cooperate and participate in all these activities.

**Mr. Ouch** (Cambodia) (*interpretation from French*): Since this is the first time I have had the honour and privilege to address the Assembly in contributing to the debate on this agenda item, I wish, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, to associate myself with previous speakers who have warmly congratulated Mr. Essy on his election to preside over this session. I am convinced that his leadership will ensure the successful completion of the work on our agenda.

I wish, first, to express our total support for the statement the Algerian delegation made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation took careful note of the what the Secretary-General's report (A/49/177 and Add.1) says about the detailed evaluation of progress made and measures to be taken in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 46/182, 47/168 and 48/57 and about the specific situation of emergency assistance for afflicted people throughout the world.

I wish to pay tribute to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen, the Economic and Social Council and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for their tireless efforts to deal with the delicate issues affecting the desperate and the afflicted.

My delegation wishes to contribute certain ideas and suggestions aimed at focusing attention on this issue. Consideration of item 37 (a) of the agenda, in accordance with resolution 47/168, is taking place at a time when devastating disasters and brutal conflicts threaten tens of millions of people throughout the world. This situation has given rise to an unprecedented increase in emergency humanitarian situations, which severely taxes the capacity of the United Nations. The strengthening of coordination in this area and the bolstering of financial resources are particularly timely and important.

With regard to the treatment of the question of coordination in respect of emergency humanitarian situations, the experience acquired by the United Nations in Cambodia, where the Organization played an historic and primary role in ending more than 20 years of war, suffering and misery, as well as in other regions of the world, proves that no institution can alone meet the growing needs of humanitarian relief.

In the case of Cambodia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and other United Nations specialized agencies, in the framework of the Paris Agreement of 23 October 1991 on Cambodia, as well as the outstanding success of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, leading to general, free and democratic elections, have helped to mitigate the ordeal of some 350,000 refugees, who have returned to their country, and of hundreds of thousands of other Cambodians, who were exposed to danger arising from mines that had been laid during the war.

On the whole, the fruitful reintegration of these refugees will create conditions conducive to the participation of all Cambodian citizens in the development programmes currently being undertaken in our country.

It must be pointed out that the meeting of the International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia, held in Paris on 7 and 9 September 1993, and the follow-up meeting in Tokyo on 10 and 11 March 1994, enabled these participants to plan programmes that must be undertaken and to determine what resources are necessary for the reconstruction of Cambodia. To that end, the donor countries at the meeting have agreed to spend more than $773 million.

The humanitarian non-governmental organizations have also played a very important role in the reconstruction of Cambodia. I wish to take this opportunity to express my Government's deep thanks to the United Nations, to friendly countries and to non-governmental organization for the timely and selfless assistance that they gave to the martyred Cambodian people. I am thinking particularly of the United States of America and France, which have provided a huge amount of assistance in the area of education and development, and of Japan, which is still providing assistance for the restoration of the communications system.

Bearing in mind the fact that the devastating effects of the recent flooding and of drought are still with us, I wish to appeal to the international community to provide assistance for thousands of afflicted Cambodian families. The activities of the specialized agencies are greatly appreciated in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caucasus region and the former Yugoslavia, where they have come up against huge challenges. However, my delegation notes with deep regret that humanitarian relief activities are being undertaken in more and more dangerous situations, which have produced victims and even caused deaths among humanitarian relief personnel.

In the past few months, tasks in various regions of the world have become increasingly difficult. Some people have even sacrificed their lives in the execution of their mission. We wish to draw special attention to the need for appropriate measures to ensure the safety of personnel.

In several of the complex emergency situations that afflict the world at present, humanitarian assistance has been an integral part of the efforts to maintain peace and security, just as the peace-keeping and peace-building efforts of the United Nations have facilitated access to humanitarian assistance and its distribution. It is therefore important that the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and of other Departments — in particular, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations — be further coordinated with a view to achieving integrated, global and sustainable action. It is in this context that my delegation welcomes the measures to be adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to enhance coordination on the ground in respect of humanitarian assistance in complex emergency situations.

We have also noted with concern that, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the inadequacy of the resources available to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund persists. We are very grateful to the community of donors and to the relevant international organizations for their willingness to examine this problem seriously. To that situation we must add the well-known serious shortage of financial resources of the United Nations, to which the Secretary-General referred in his statement of 12 October 1994, which confirmed that on 31 August 1994 the Organization had $375 million available, whereas it needs $400 million a month to meet its budget expenses and finance its peace-keeping operations. The Kingdom of Cambodia, despite the meagreness of its resources, is committed to meeting its obligations in this

respect. My delegation attaches great importance to draft resolution A/49/L.19, which will enable us to make progress in our efforts to find the best solutions to the pressing problems concerning strengthened coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

I wish, in conclusion, to express the gratitude of the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia to humanitarian emergency relief workers who, often in very difficult and dangerous situations, devote themselves body and soul to helping those in need. Their noble sacrifices deserve our deep appreciation and gratitude.

**Mr. Mabilangan** (Philippines): I represent one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. In addition to typhoons and storms, the Philippines has suffered earthquakes, flash floods and volcanic eruptions.

Many natural disasters defy accurate prediction, though many are predictable. Whether predictable or unforeseeable, all disasters — ideally — could be anticipated and avoided or prepared for. Preparations for disasters are best based on lessons from the past. Usually the countries that are ready for disasters are those that possess disaster-minimizing technology and the resources to cope with emergency situations. But many developing countries lack such resources. Thus, although the primary responsibility for coping with emergencies lies in the afflicted countries, assistance from States with greater resources is necessary.

For any given emergency, there are certain imperatives: immediate relief, prompt evaluation of damage and coordination of logistical support for the deployment of personnel and the distribution of materials.

However, it is usually the aftermath of disasters that is the most difficult. For communities and nations, growth and development must be pursued despite losses and set-backs.

The founding fathers of the United Nations recognized the importance of humanitarian concerns. It is in this spirit that we are now sharing our efforts during the current International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Any in-depth consideration of natural and man-made disasters should include the following elements: first, prevention; secondly, preparedness; thirdly, emergency management, including early-warning mechanisms, evaluation of damage and of types and sources of aid, coordination of donors and distribution of aid; fourthly, rehabilitation; fifthly, continued development and, sixthly, optimizing the cooperative, coordinating and leadership role of the United Nations.

Emergency management and rehabilitation are important concerns of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Post-disaster development, however, is a vital undertaking and requires the concerted efforts of the entire United Nations system.

Granted that the United Nations system is doing well in coming to the aid of countries experiencing natural or man-made disasters, we must ask ourselves: whether the system could do any better. In this connection, some questions may be relevant. First, could the assessment of the gravity of a disaster, in terms of injury to or loss of life and property, be accomplished any faster so that, secondly, such assessment could be communicated to the various United Nations programmes and agencies concerned and thus, thirdly, avoid the inadequacy or excess of particular items of aid, overlapping, superfluity and unnecessary costs? Fourthly, should not donor and other countries contribute more to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund?

The level of development of any country determines its capacity either to prevent or to be prepared for any calamity, any disaster. Indeed, very often the root causes of disasters may be traced to the effects of underdevelopment.

The development-relief and rehabilitation-development continuum is of cardinal importance. In this matter, the international community can lend a determined helping hand. The international community did in fact give much thought to natural disasters during the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held at Yokohama, Japan, earlier this year. All countries should seriously support the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, bearing in mind that natural-disaster reduction contributes immensely to sustainable development. If it is true that an ounce of prevention are more effective than a pound of cure, disaster prevention and mitigation are more effective than humanitarian assistance, despite the importance of such assistance.

**The President**: We shall hear the remaining speakers in the debate on this item at our next meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly

decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Hasan** (Iraq)(*interpretation from Arabic*): We have some remarks on the Secretary-General's report now before us in document A/49/207, "International cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait," because that report did not give sufficient consideration to the environmental effects of the conflict on Iraq, its people, its land, its waters and its atmosphere.

Everyone knows that that environmental damage continues and, indeed, is being aggravated by the continuing unjustifiable embargo. As one example only I would mention the damage caused by more than 120,000 tons of bombs dropped on Iraq, the equivalent of 8 atomic bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima, not to mention the resultant systematic destruction of all life-lines in Iraq and its consequences, including the complete destruction of the water-purification, sanitation and sewage systems.

Furthermore, there has been the use by allied forces of prohibited weapon systems such as bombs manufactured from depleted uranium, which have caused and continue to cause the death of large numbers of Iraqi civilians from the radiation and toxic materials released by such bombs, and that is in addition to the widespread environmental damage caused by the continuing embargo and the deterioration of services in the country.

Notwithstanding these remarks, we had hoped that the Secretary-General's report would be debated in an objective manner with the aim of mitigating the harmful effects on the region's environment as a whole. However, most regrettably, the representative of the Kuwaiti regime has gone beyond that commitment and has used this forum to level accusations against my country. Those accusations have no basis in fact or logic. I wonder: Why does the representative of Kuwait imagine that burning and spilling oil into the Gulf is the doing of Iraq and not the action of the allied forces that did bomb oil wells, did bomb loading docks and did bomb docked ships? Furthermore, why did the representative of Kuwait not point his accusing finger at those who sank more than 200 Iraqi civilian and merchant ships, including some giant oil tankers, with all the environmental disaster that ensued? Why did he mention only Iraqi ammunition dumps, and not the ammunition dumps and mines of foreign forces? Why is it only the Iraqi ammunition dumps that cause environmental damage?

My country has expressed a sincere desire to leave the events of the past behind and overcome the environmental damage caused to the region as a result of the conflict. The representatives of Kuwait should respond to that call responsibly. They should refrain from levelling unjustified accusations.

**Mr. Al-Sabah** (Kuwait): The facts just stated by the Iraqi representative are not totally accurate, so I would like to set the record straight.

We are all aware of the facts and events that unfolded in the Gulf in 1990 and 1991. We were all witness to the deliberate dumping by Iraq of millions and millions of barrels of oil into the waters of the Gulf as part of a military strategy. This event occurred before the ground military operations had taken place. Again the Iraqi representative stated that the fires in the Kuwaiti oil wells were the result of the war. But we are all aware, and we all saw via all kinds of communication outlets, that the Iraqi regime deliberately set fire to more than 800 oil wells in Kuwait and used that as a military deterrent before the ground war took place.

The facts are clear and history bears witness to them. The Iraqi regime has been and is solely responsible for the environmental deterioration our area is suffering and will continue to suffer in the near and distant future.

**The Chairman:** I now call on the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Hasan** (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I apologize for having asked to speak a second time at this late hour, and I will be very brief. I would like to confirm that this item deals with the coordination of efforts to mitigate the environmental consequences of disasters, be they man-made or natural. No one should use this forum as a place to level accusations or to issue value-judgements.

**The Chairman:** I now call on the representative of Kuwait.

**Mr. Al-Sabah** (Kuwait): I will not waste the precious time of this prestigious body. I would just like to state once again that the facts are clear, the whole

international community is a witness to what happened, and we strongly think that the environmental damage that resulted in the Gulf is and will continue to be the sole responsibility of the Iraqi regime.

*The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.*